

Experts welcome report calling for radical reform of the Medical Council of India

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A landmark report calling for radical reform of the Medical Council of India is welcomed by leading doctors in *The BMJ* this week.

Dr Sanjay Nagral, a consultant surgeon at Jaslok Hospital in Mumbai, and colleagues say the recent standing committee report to the Indian parliament "lays bare the Medical Council of India's (MCI) failure to oversee quality and integrity in health services in the country."

In 2014, *The BMJ* launched a campaign against corruption that sparked global interest in the rampant practices of kickbacks for referrals, revenue targets in corporate hospitals, and capitation fees in private medical colleges in India.

"For those of us in the [medical profession](#) in India who have been despairing of the state of affairs, this report is a long awaited panacea," they write.

The MCI was established under the Indian Medical Council Act 1933 and given responsibility for maintaining standards of medical education, providing ethical oversight, maintaining the medical register, and, through amendments in 1993, sanctioning medical colleges, they explain.

It has, however, been much criticised and was temporarily dissolved in 2010 after charges of corruption.

The MCI is also guilty of inaction on numerous ethical transgressions

that accompany healthcare in India and of hounding whistleblowers who have attempted to raise these problems, they add.

Its policies "have been coloured by those with vested interests, leading to a lack of uniform standards in undergraduate and postgraduate medical education and mushrooming of private medical institutions, which are run as business ventures," they argue.

The MCI has also "failed to create a rigorous transparent system for accrediting medical colleges, leading to geographical maldistribution and creation of "ghost faculties" in private medical colleges."

Dr Nagral and colleagues say the committee "must be lauded for its thorough analysis of the state of healthcare in the country and paving the way for radical reform." But they warn that it overlooks, "the complicity of ruling politicians, many of whom own private medical colleges."

They believe that the ruling party "will have to muster strong political support to act on the committee's recommendations as this will inevitably involve hurting well entrenched and powerful interests."

And they call on "sustained pressure from the medical community, activists, civil society organisations, and the media" to avoid the report remaining "under consideration" by the health ministry forever.

"For the citizens of India strained by the dual burden of expensive and unethical healthcare, the report could be a powerful tool in their struggle to make the healthcare system deliver their needs," they conclude.

More information: A radical prescription for the Medical Council of India, *The BMJ*, www.bmj.com/cgi/doi/10.1136/bmj.i1731

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